LO THE POOR INDIAN

Degraded, Filthy Lot of Superstitious Creatures.

CALIFORNIA'S BAD BRAND

Cooper Could Have Found Nothing Romantic About Them--Polygamy Less Popular Than Polyandry.

The California Indian differs from the brave of any other tribe or species. His nature is modified by the balmy climate, and he only lives to dream or sleep. He lives in a state of nature. In the spring and summer they camp in the canyons or in the glens along the pretty streams, living not in clover, but upon it, also upon such grasses and herbage as the well watered valleys and luxuriant plains produce. In the fall season they desert their "summer resorts" for the foothills and mountains, where nuts and berries are abundant. When nature is bountiful, they live high; when there is a drought, and a consequent scarcity of nuts, acorns and game, they fast. They depend upon what chance throws in their way, and no matter how plentiful the crop may be one season, they make no provision for the next, and if the crop is short there is a panic.

They are too lazy to be vicious—even their amusements are of the kind that demand little or no physical exertion. They seek food only when hungry and cease when they have had their fill. They have no regular hours for meals, but eat when hungry—if they have food. If not, they go and "dig." After a full meal an Indian will sprawl upon the ground, upon his face, and remain for hours, sleeping, dreaming or in a state of mental inactivity, waiting for time to pass. The squaws prepare the frugal meal by pounding acorns and nuts on a flat rock, something like the Mexican metate. The meal is kneaded into dough, fashioned into thin cakes, and cooked on rocks. A gruel is made by putting the same meal into a water-tight basket half filled with water, and then putting in heated stones. Then the water is turned out, the rocks rolled away and the braves go for the soup. Salt is not used, as they believe it causes the bones of the body to decay.

Some time ago mills were introduced for the grinding of the meal—one mill

INDIAN WOOD CARRIER.

performing as much work as twenty-five squaws in the same space of time. The priests at the mission discouraged this "innovation," as they did all others, leading the Indians to believe that the cakes were sweeter when pounded out on the flat rock.

The conquering Spaniards found them in a state of tribal warfare. They had no organized system of government.

Each tribe lived in a cluster of brush huts called a rancheria, having its separate ground for hunting and fishing. When the crops of nuts, herbs and grasses were scant, they burnt their huts, took up their beds and other effects, and walked to another more nutritious field.

The characteristics of these bands varied with the sections they inhabited. In addition to his bow and arrow each adult had a knife made of bone, used in warfare, also to dig roots and herbs for his daily meal. They had no chiefs, not even being advanced that far in a system of government. They combined only for the purpose of robbery, and took their tribal name from the valley they inhabited, or the river upon whose banks they dwelt.

The conquering Spaniards gave to the rivers, valleys and mountains different names, from which the Indians renamed, and that is how California Indian tribes have Spanish names. When an Indian was baptized in the church, he was given another name, and thus his individuality was totally lost.

Their petty wars were waged over such trifling matters as gathering acorns upon the land of another, and hunting rabbits upon the public domain of another tribe was considered a casus belli. The opposing armies advanced upon each other each making the greatest noise possible to frighten the other. The strongest warriors were in the front, the elders next, and the squaws and children served as a rear guard and ambulance corps, to haul off the dead and wounded, also to pick up the spent arrows of the enemy and to serve them to their own warriors. The squaws also serve as transportation wagons in carrying the provisions in addition to their pappooses.

As the missions prospered the Indians retrograded correspondingly. They were subjected and held in such a condition of vassalage that there was not enough manhood left among them for even a neighborhood quarrel.

In stature the California Indians are below the medium height, have large bodies, but ill-developed limbs, are but squat and ungainly, as a rule. Their faces are wide, foreheads low, eyes small, noses flat like that of the negro, nostrils broad, large mouth, cheek bones prominent, hair black, straight and as coarse as a horse's mane. The costume of the men is the breech-clout around the loins, and the skin of an animal around the shoulders. The women wear a girdle, from which is suspended a short skirt of dried grass reaching to the knees. Sometimes their bodies are covered with a coat of black mud, as a protection against cold. In the spring they wash off their protective suit.

Different customs prevail at the various rancherias, except that of tattooing, which all the females indulge in to their fancy. Tattooing is done by puncturing the skin with thorns and rubbing powdered charcoal into the bleeding sore. This makes an indelible bluish tint, and the squaws believe it makes them attractive. The face, lips and breast are tattooed.

Indian girls are marriageable at the age of twelve years, and sometimes they ask for husbands before they reach that age. They have no word to express marriage. Jealousy with either sex is a rare quality. Their system is a mixture of polygamy and

INDIAN ACORN GRANARY.

polyandry, its opposite. They have no honor nor shame, no ambition, no envy, no particular object in living, and no hope of a future life.

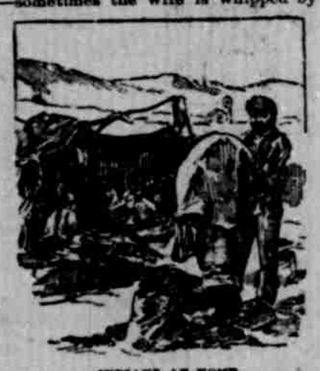
Before the Spaniards came they were extremely healthful.

The Indian maiden makes her debut by the roasting process. A hole in the ground about three by six feet is filled with stones, over which a fire is built. When the stones are red hot the fire is removed, and over them is spread a bed of wet leaves. The debutantes are placed upon this bed, by no means one of roses, and another layer of green boughs is spread over them. They remain in this inferno pit three or four hours, occasionally peeking out for fresh air, laughing and talking, perhaps proud of this ordeal which is believed to aid their maturity.

Troops of old squaws, with their bodies and faces painted in various designs, encircle this barbecueing pit, and accompany their chant with a walk-around, hippetty-hop dance, which would seem to aggravate the tortures of the premature candidates for matrimony. This strange custom is practiced principally by the Indians of the San Juan Capistrano valley.

Their marriage ceremony is informal—there are no cards, no orange blossoms, no white veil, and no mamma weeping stage tears. The bride does not blush, and frequently she gives herself away. Every year is a leap year, and the maiden proposes if the young brave is too timid, but, like the paleface squaw, she generally knows that she has landed her game. If refused, she is not scandalized. There are no long engagements. The bride, arrayed in her best skirt and ornaments of shells and beads, is brought by her father to the brave bridegroom, who sits in state in an improvised arbor. He takes her by the hand and she sits by his side. A circle is formed and all dance excepting the happy couple. The bride is stripped of her ornaments by the squaws, who divide them—a reversal of the paleface system of giving presents to the bridal couple. This completes the ceremony.

If either becomes dissatisfied they separate. The divorce is very informal—sometimes the wife is whipped by



INDIANS AT HOME.

the husband, who then takes her back to her father's hut.

A feast follows a birth, and as an Indian is always ready to eat, these feasts are largely attended, and last several days, much to the discomfiture of the "happy father," who fasts.

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